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INMATE NEEDS OF PREGNANT PRISONERS



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Every person is treated equally before the law. But, when it comes to people with special needs like pregnant and lactating women, the disabled and people who need medical support, they are given some sort of special care and considerations according to their physical, social, and mental wellbeing.

Let's talk about the special needs given to a woman during her gestation period (pregnancy period) and about the post gestation period (parturition). According to the NATIONAL EXPERT COMMITTEE ON WOMEN PRISONERS 1987, pregnant women need to be given special care and special consideration. These women cannot be given death penalty until their delivery. Most of their needs are minimally met by the prison systems, and thus most of the time the mother remains at high risk due to the unavailability of nursing and other needs.

The law prohibits using handcuffs on pregnant women unless they possess any sort of harm to themselves or others. Therefore to ensure the mother's and child's safety, the provisions of the NATIONAL MODEL PRISON MANUAL must be followed strictly to make arrangements for the temporary release for delivery of the child in a hospital. Information on the state of women should be made to the court that has ordered detention, to enable the court to grant bail. The birth certificate of the child will not have the prison's name as the place of birth rather will have any hospital's name to avoid any future social stigma. The pregnant woman should be given special diet plans, separate accommodation to maintain hygiene so as to protect her infant from any sort of contagion for at least a year after the child is born. She should also be arranged with treatments for a safe delivery and pregnancy, which is free of cost. The mothers should be given adequate information to make a suitable choice (medical terminations). Aadhaar cards must be provided to both mother and the child.

After parturition (delivery), the child should be kept in the prison along with the mother in a manner in which they don't feel like a prisoner. NGOs, schools, paediatricians can be engaged to ensure the basic facilities of those children to practise a healthy lifestyle. Ideally, no child should be kept in a prison along with the mother after the child is six years old. In case no family or friends are available to take care of the child, then the child will be sent to child care institutions. Overnight visits must be allowed at least once a quarter for minor children living outside the prison to maintain a bond with their mother.

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